

Approaches to evangelism

Throughout history, Christians have used many different approaches to spread Christianity via the practice of evangelism. Christianity began with only a few different evangelistic approaches, but over the years, many different forms of evangelism have

been employed by various groups to spread their faith. Many of these forms of evangelism are often employed in only certain parts of the world by Christians in different geographical areas. In particular, most new **approaches to evangelism** today have arisen out of Europe or the United States, especially when new technologies are used for the effort of evangelism..

Open-air preaching





A representative painting of Jesus Christ delivering the open-air Sermon on the Mount

Open-air preaching is an approach to evangelism characterized by speaking in public places out in the open, generally to crowds of people at a time, using a message, sermon, or speech which spreads the gospel. Supporters of this approach note that both Jesus^[1] and many of the Old Testament prophets often preached about God in

public places.^[2] It is one of the oldest approaches to evangelism.^[1]

One of the earliest open-air preachers of Christianity, according to the gospels, was Jesus Christ, whose first specifically recorded sermon was the Sermon on the Mount,^{[1][2]} which took place on a mountainside in the open air.^[3] In the Gospel of Luke (Luke 6:17-49), it was recorded that Jesus also gave an open-air sermon known as the Sermon on the Plain.^[2]

After Jesus' death, many of his

apostles and followers open-air preached the gospel in the Temple of Jerusalem or in other open spaces.^{[1][2]}

During the Middle Ages it was used. During Protestant Reformation, open-air preaching was often employed by Protestants throughout Europe^[4] who could not always preach inside churches, which were mostly Catholic.^[5] Open-air preaching in Europe continued during the rise of Puritanism and other Protestant movements.^[2] It was often used in Pastoral environments as well as in

cities, the former sometimes due to a desire to avoid the authorities,^[6] and the latter because, for one reason, it could reach eccentric people living in cities who would not otherwise hear the gospel.^[7]

In the time period of the late 19th century and early-to-mid-20th century many famous open-air preachers in the United States began to preach, such as Billy Sunday^[8] and Billy Graham.

Graham in particular used a combination of open-air preaching and the recent advent of televangelism to

broadcast his sermons, which often took place in large venues such as stadiums, to large portions of the world and millions of Americans.^[9]

John Wesley, founder of Methodism declared, "I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit ... To this day field preaching is a cross to me, but I know my commission and see no other way of preaching the gospel to every creature."

Wesley's contemporary, Anglican preacher George Whitefield stated: "I believe I never was more acceptable to my Master than when I was standing to teach those hearers in the open fields ... I now preach to ten times more people than I should, if had been confined to the churches." Including the "field" outside Park Street.

It was said that one of the regular practices of America evangelist Dwight L. Moody in the late 1860s "was to exhort the passersby in the evenings from the steps of the court house.

Often these impromptu gathering drew as many hecklers as supporters."^[10]

Open-air preachers throughout history have often noted that preaching to large crowds often causes preachers to be abused in certain ways, typically by having objects thrown at them such as rotting vegetables or unsanitary liquids of many varieties.^[11]

Charles Spurgeon, the famous open-air Baptist preacher of England, believed that open-air preaching was instrumental in getting people to hear

the gospel who might otherwise never hear it,^{[2][12]} and many open-air preachers today believe that it reaches many more people at once than other approaches to evangelism do.^[13]

Charles Spurgeon recommends several things for open-air preachers, such as never trying to speak into the wind, trying to speak away from the wind so one's voice will carry farther, (sometimes up to half a mile by Spurgeon's account) keeping sermons concise instead of overly verbose and complicated, use illustrations and anecdotes to keep the crowd

interested, and to not speak at the very top of your voice so you don't wear yourself out too quickly.^[2] Spurgeon also recommended to never use tents when preaching due to their muffling effects,^[14] and to be careful of what is on the other side of walls you may be preaching in front of, since people behind the wall or living in spaces in buildings could harass preachers.^[15]

Trickle-down evangelism

Trickle-down evangelism is an approach to evangelism primarily

concerned with converting high-ranking members of a society, so that their influence can serve to help spread Christianity throughout the society in question. It was practiced especially often during the Middle Ages.

Trickle-down evangelism was practiced throughout China multiple times during the Middle Ages, with examples such as converted or sympathetic officials helping the Jesuits or other parts of the Catholic church spread,^[16] or the expedition of Marco Polo resulting in the Mongol ruler of China Kublai Khan

inviting the Pope to send "teachers of science and religion" to China.^[17]

Trickle-down evangelism was also applied often in European areas during ancient times, such as in the northern Sweden area, as the Catholic Church tried to send missionaries into the area.^[18]

Door-to-door preaching

Door-to-door preaching is an approach to evangelism where a Christian will go from household to household in a certain area to evangelize to residents,

often in conjunction with passing out gospel tracts. Jesus often went into other people's homes during his own ministry, and according to *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, it is a very important approach to evangelism.^[19] One of the first modern large-scale uses of door-to-door preaching was when the Oriental Mission Society attempted to visit the homes of an entire nation, by visiting 10.3 million homes in Japan from 1912 to 1917.^[19] The international organization Every Home for Christ began door-to-door preaching in 1953

throughout many countries, and as of 2010, total home visits by their members became 1.3 billion.^{[19][20]}

Many local parishes and churches worldwide use this approach to evangelism.^[19]

Groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses^[21] and Mormons are famous in particular for spreading their beliefs by door to door evangelism at people's homes, often in pairs or small groups. Both groups' main organizations use door-to-door preaching to a great extent. Full-time

missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints use this, and other techniques, to find people to teach.^[22]

Evangelizing through a sermon

Many churches regularly have a gospel message preached in a sermon. Often, this will include an altar call where people are invited to come forward and "accept Christ". The use of altar calls is somewhat controversial, while it is practiced by many evangelical

churches, some Calvinists object to it in the grounds it creates false conversions.^[23]

Lifestyle evangelism

Lifestyle evangelism is an approach to evangelism characterized by someone demonstrating their faith by their actions in the hope that people around them will be impressed with how God affects that person's life, and become a Christian. According to *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* printed in 2004, approximately 100 million

people use this approach to evangelism.^[19]

Supporters of this approach to evangelism often cite Matthew 5:16 as a proof verse.^{[24][25]} Supporters also often point out that Jesus drew people to God by showing them kindness and performing good deeds, while detractors sometimes note that people may not realize one's good behavior is due to Christianity. Supporters claim this is more effective than direct evangelism because of the perception that it is harder to live "righteously"

than to preach a sermon.

Friendship evangelism

Similar to lifestyle evangelism, friendship evangelism is an approach to evangelism characterized by Christians developing relationships with people in order to show them kindness and talk to them about God eventually. Supporters sometimes say that Jesus related to those who took an interest in him as friends, or that it is more effective than other methods of evangelism which are seen as less

personal.^[26] This approach is also known as "loving someone into the kingdom". Opponents hold that friendship evangelism contrasts with the approach of Jesus, Paul and the apostles towards preaching the gospel.^[27] Missionary dating takes this a step further and Flirty Fishing takes it to an extreme.

Child evangelism

The child evangelism movement is a Christian evangelism movement that was begun in the 20th century. It

focuses on the **4/14 Window** which centers on evangelizing children between the ages of 4 and 14 years old.^[28]

Creative evangelism

This approach to evangelism is where the creative arts (such as music, visual art, drama, film) are used to present a gospel message.^[29] Examples include Wendy Alec's novel "The Fall of Lucifer", Christian rock band Delirious? and Johann Sebastian Bach's musical composition "Matthäuspassion" (Saint

Matthew Passion).^[30] However, some ministries refer to this kind of evangelism as simply the practice of finding creative ways to evangelize.^[31]

One of the most famous examples of creative evangelism is George Handel's oratio, "Messiah", written in 1741. It is the most performed major choral work in history, has been tied to the revival of the Church of England and to influencing famous evangelist John Wesley's theology concerning Eternal security, and in modern times, has around four million viewers per year.^[32]

Campus Crusade for Christ, an evangelical Christian association with branches in a multitude of countries, owns the distribution rights for a movie called "Jesus Film", a presentation of the life of Jesus Christ. This movie, which has been translated into 80 languages, has been viewed by about 850 million people.^[33]

In the Church of Pakistan, the Diocese of Hyderabad uses this approach to evangelism among tribal groups in areas of Pakistan which have a high population of Sindhis.^[34]

Using Gospel tracts

A gospel tract in the Christian sense is a leaflet with a gospel message. It is typically a short presentation of the Gospel lasting only a few pages, and is typically printed on small pieces of paper.^[35] Estimated numbers of tracts distributed in the year 2000 amount to around 5 billion. It is often used in conjunction with street preaching or door to door preaching. As an approach to evangelism, many modern evangelists attest to the usefulness of gospel tracts to spread the gospel.^[36]

Televangelism

Televangelism is an approach to evangelism characterized by an evangelistic message presented through the medium of television,^[37] often through a charismatic sermon. Large Christian television networks such as the Catholic broadcasting channel EWTN or the Protestant televangelism channel Trinity Broadcasting Network feature many televangelist preachers.^[38]

Televangelism was started in the

United States and Canada in the mid-20th century, as a primarily evangelical Protestant approach to evangelism. It made Christian viewpoints much more visible in the world at the time than they were before.^[39]

Radio evangelism

Radio evangelism is an approach to evangelism which began around 1921, and has reached more people per hour than any other kind of evangelism, according to *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism*.^[19] It is the usage of

radio broadcasts to evangelize to listeners, sometimes worldwide in one broadcast.

Maria Miranda, the most listened to radio evangelist from Latin America in 1990, was heard by over 100 million people per day through 537 radio stations in 22 countries during that time.^[19] In Yemen, a country in which 97 percent of the country is listed as Muslim,^[40] 10 percent of the population listens to Christian radio.^[19] The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has had a radio station on KFUO called "The

Lutheran Hour" since 1925, had 5 million listeners by 1931, and broadcast in over 31 languages with 40 million listeners in 1987.^[19] The first missionary specific radio station, HCJB, went on the air in Ecuador on December 25, 1931.^[41]

Internet evangelism

Internet evangelism is a form of evangelism where the Christian gospel is presented on the Internet.^[42] This may include a website presenting apologetics about biblical inerrancy,

someone discussing their faith in a chat room, evangelical messages or advertisements on the home pages of Christian organizations,^[19] or other methods of using the Internet to spread Christianity.

In the United States, the Internet Evangelism Coalition , set up by the Billy Graham Center in 1999,^[43] initiated Internet Evangelism Day on the last Sunday of April every year.

In their Pew Internet and American Life Project, the Pew Research Center found

that "Nearly two-thirds of online Americans use the Internet for faith-related reasons. The sixty-four percent of Internet users who perform spiritual and religious activities online represent nearly eighty-two million Americans".^[44]

Among the most popular and important spiritually related online activities:

- Thirty-eight percent of the nation's 128 million Internet users have sent and received email with spiritual content.

- Thirty-five percent have sent or received online greeting cards related to religious holidays.
- Thirty-two percent have gone online to read news accounts of religious events and affairs.
- Twenty-one percent have sought information about how to celebrate religious holidays.
- Seventeen percent have looked for information about where they could attend religious services.
- Seven percent have made or responded to online prayer requests.

- Seven percent have made donations to religious organizations or charities.

Phone evangelism

This approach to evangelism involves using phones to contact people in order to spread the gospel to them. This sometimes takes the form of random phone calls, or is done after someone contacts the evangelist to recommend people to whom a person may want the evangelist to evangelize. The huge growth in cell phones and other mobile devices is opening up the way for new

and creative methods of evangelism.^[45]

Personal evangelism

Sometimes referred to as "one to one" or "personal work", this approach to evangelism is when one Christian evangelizes to, typically, one non-Christian, or only a few non-Christians, in a private manner.^[19] A 1982 Gallup Poll revealed that 51 percent of all Americans had tried to convince someone to become a Christian during their life.^[19]

Creation evangelism

Not to be confused with creative evangelism, creation evangelism is the use of creationist philosophical and theological arguments to prove the literal interpretation of Genesis and thus the reliability of the Bible and the truth of the Christian gospel to people so that they may become convinced that Christianity is true.^[46] This approach has also been described as using a strategy of persuading a "non-believer that modern science is wrong and creationism is correct on scientific

terms. Once that is accepted, then the non-believer will accept the truth of the Bible and become a Christian."^[47]

Archaeology evangelism

Used with considerable success by groups such as Seventh-day Adventists and Christadelphians, practitioners use archaeological discoveries to demonstrate the historical and prophetic reliability of the Bible. The ready availability of archaeological programs on radio and television has made this approach less popular and

effective than in earlier years. At one time this approach drew large crowds to London's New Gallery Theatre and the Opera House in Sydney with David Down, as well as many less prestigious venues such as halls and churches.

Prophetic evangelism

A method employed mainly by charismatic Christians. This is where (as its practitioners believe) God speaks through a Christian to a non-believer to say something that will prompt that person to seek God. On

most occasions it is something that the speaker could not have known naturally; for example, someone who is having a secret affair may be told that God knows they are doing wrong and wants them to change their ways.

However, some critics of this approach note that other religions appear to use a similar method to spread their faith.

Treasure hunts

So called *treasure hunts* are a type of prophetic evangelism.^[48] A small group

of Christians takes time to pray and listen to revelation from the Holy Spirit about people God wants the group to find. There is a close correlation to personal evangelism. This type of evangelism may be referred to as a game of searching for God's treasures, which are people. The group typically receives revelation, or "clues", consisting of places, clothing, hairstyle, or situations which will help identify the "treasure".

After receiving these revelations, the group goes out and looks for the

people identified by the clues.

Sometimes they are able to speak God's love and the Gospel of Jesus Christ into somebody's life. On other occasions the group prays for the person's healing or other needs.

The main focus in this type of evangelism is to let people know that they are valuable to God and that God is searching for them as his treasure.

Use of props

Various props may serve as visual aids to accompany the verbal explanation of

the Gospel message in many of the above approaches. Such props include variations on the Wordless Book, commercial products such as the eCube , and specialized flannelgraph or flip chart sets.

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External links

- The Reformed Evangelist A website which discusses Calvinistic approaches to evangelism

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Last edited 1 month ago by Deli nk

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